

Subject: **Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update**
Date: **21 September 2015**

Background

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has had a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of lead, arsenic, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater released into the upper portions of Cement Creek, and into the Animas River.

- Based on EPA surface water data collected following the August 5, 2015 Gold King Mine release, San Juan River water quality in Navajo Nation has returned to pre-event conditions. EPA issued a press release on August 19, 2015 stating that water quality in the San Juan River has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation.
- EPA Region 9 continues to coordinate with representatives from the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the States of AZ, Utah, NM, and federal agencies Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, and US Geological Survey. EPA R9 is coordinating with R8, R6, involved State agencies and Navajo Nation to develop a long-term sampling strategy for implementation by the three EPA Regions.
- The EPA national website now includes both San Juan River and Lake Powell data.

Current Actions

- **Sampling on the San Juan River is undertaken twice a week at sampling locations on the Navajo Nation. Surface water and sediment samples were collected on the 15th and 17th of September. Force protection is being provided by the Navajo Nation.**
- **EPA Region 9 plans to demobilize the remaining 8 EPA-installed water tanks remaining on the Navajo Nation. EPA subcontractors are assessing the water level in each of the remaining tanks and preparing a demobilization plan.**
- **The Bureau of Indian Affairs is maintaining two watering tank locations, at Hogback and Shiprock, until 30 September 2015. BIA did stop refilling these tanks on Sept. 5, and since then Navajo Nation has been refilling and maintaining the tanks.**
- **On 7 September, EPA received a request for additionally hay deliveries from the Navajo Nation. On 9 September, EPA delivered 384 bales of hay to the Upper Fruitland chapter. Three deliveries of hay (384 bales each) are scheduled for Friday, 18 September, and one hay delivery is scheduled for Monday, 21 September. EPA will accept requests for hay delivery through September 30, 2015**
- **Steve Calanog EPA R9 FOSC and three USCG national strike force/incident management assist team (NSF/IMAT) personnel have deployed to Window Rock, starting Monday, 21 September, to provide support to the Navajo Nation EOC. The CG IMAT members include a planning section chief, an operations section chief and a situation unit leader. The EPA and CG resources will be assisting NN EOC in establishing their response structure and planning process, so that an incident action plan can be produced, on a regular cycle. EPA R9 has transitioned out of the Durango incident command and will be focused on providing support from Window Rock, AZ.**
- **EPA Region 9 held a conference call with Natural Resource Conservation Service, USDA personnel to discuss how NRCS could assist in evaluating and interpreting the surface water and sediment data from the San Juan River. The NRCS state conservationists from Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona and NRCS headquarters personnel were on the call.**
- **The NN Window Rock EOC has requested that US EPA join with the NN in a unified command in Window Rock.**
- The Public Hotline number (1-844-607-9700)

Personnel in the NN EOC, Window Rock, AZ
1 R9 OSC, 3 USCG NSF/IMAT members